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ABSTRACT

Everyone who graduates from high school truly literate starts to develop that literacy in the earliest grades. Educators must look to schools where students are achieving the highest literacy standards and identify the practices that enable them to achieve those goals. This report tells the stories of eight such schools--Portland Elementary School (Portland, Arkansas), Fort Worth Independent School District (Fort Worth, Texas), Wilson Primary School (Phoenix, Arizona), Lebanon School District (Lebanon, Pennsylvania), Park Forest-Chicago Heights School District 163 (Chicago, Illinois), Roland Park Elementary/Middle School (Baltimore, Maryland), City Springs Elementary School (Baltimore, Maryland), and Eshelman Avenue Elementary (Lomita, California). The stories in the report describe the history of each school, the challenges each faced, and some attempts to meet those challenges. Following the report's case studies, an appendix of research regarding using the "Reading Mastery" program has been included--the program has been used by the eight schools to bring about demonstrable positive effects on reading achievement. The school stories in the report include a focus on these results. According to the report, the schools serve children with a range of socioeconomic, ethnic, and geographic characteristics, and, as a group, they show an impressive reversal of the trends of failure, documenting improvements in performance and levels of achievement that often dramatically exceed those of their peers in similar schools. The schools and the reading program that are described in the report also share several other critically important common characteristics--they all have: implemented ongoing programs of professional development for their teachers; used assessments of student progress during the school year to ensure effective instruction; demonstrated the importance of the principal as the instructional leader; and created climates within their schools to encourage learning. (NKA)

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RESULTS *with* READING MASTERY

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The results are proven,
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April 2002

Results. More than at any time in recent history, attention is being focused on the results our schools produce. Expectations have been raised. Student performance standards have been identified for virtually every subject. It is essential that we maintain these high standards and expectations.

Everyone who graduates from high school truly literate starts to develop that literacy in the earliest grades. We must look to schools where students are achieving the highest standards of literacy and identify the practices that enable them to achieve those goals.

This report tells the stories of eight different schools. The stories describe the history of each school, the challenges each faced, and some of the attempts to meet those challenges. Following these case studies, we have included an appendix of research supporting instruction using the *Reading Mastery* program, which has been used by all of the schools described to bring about demonstrable positive effects on reading achievement.

Each of the school stories includes a focus on these results. Wherever possible, we present the most recently available information about recent growth trends and on the grades most directly affected by the reading program being implemented. The schools serve children with a range of socioeconomic, ethnic, and geographic characteristics. They share many characteristics, perhaps the most important of which is a set of results. As a group they show an impressive reversal of the trends of failure, documenting improvements in performance and levels of achievement that often dramatically exceed those of their peers in similar schools.

The schools and the effective reading program that are described here also share several other critically important common characteristics. They all have:

- implemented ongoing programs of professional development for their teachers
- used assessments of student progress during the school year to ensure effective instruction
- demonstrated the importance of the principal as the instructional leader
- created exciting climates within their schools to encourage learning

And most importantly, these schools demonstrate the importance of maintaining high expectations for all students, not just the brightest or most privileged.

The leaders of the schools described herein are eager to share what they have learned and to see their practices and experiences spread to other schools. Please feel free to contact the people who are identified in each article. We've provided telephone numbers, fax numbers, addresses, and e-mail addresses wherever possible to make this communication as easy as possible.

Let's learn from those who have the results that show this effectiveness. Let's help teachers and supervisors use this information. Let's all work together to help our children become more effective learners.

Sandra Feldman
President
American Federation of Teachers

Robert E. Evanson
President
McGraw-Hill Education

Vincent Ferrandino
National Association of
Elementary School Principals

Parents, teachers, and the public at large are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of learning to read. Reading is the key to virtually every other kind of learning. No more important public service exists than teaching our children the reading and language skills that they need to be successful, contributing members of society. Our society has been described as an information society, and reading is the key to accessing the world's expanding bank of information and knowledge.

The descriptions that follow are of schools where success in reading is on an upswing. Many factors come together to bring about this success—teacher dedication to what works, effective instructional materials based on research-proven practices, targeted professional development, the use of assessment data on student learning to make decisions, and a principal who makes student learning the top priority.

The American Federation of Teachers issued a report in 1998 on reading programs, citing and recommending numerous practices that had been proven to bring about improved reading abilities in young children. In her critically acclaimed work *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning About Print*, published in 1990, Marilyn Jager Adams outlines many necessary elements of a successful reading program. This represents an exhaustive study of the best research about the important elements of early reading instruction. It brings together into one volume for the first time the vast array of studies on early reading instruction. The Foorman, et al., study on preventing reading failure in at-risk children, published in 1998 in the *Journal of Educational Psychology*, also highlighted the need for such research-based practices. And the message has been repeated in other significant recent reports, such as that of the National Reading Panel, *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction*, and the National Research Council 1998 report, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*. And more recently, the 2001 report *Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read* was published by the Partnership for Reading, a collaborative effort of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the National Institute for Literacy, and the U.S. Department of Education. These reports and many others recommend the kinds of systematic, explicit instruction that are necessary for effective reading instruction:

Siegfried Engelmann

- explicit instruction in phonemic awareness
- direct, systematic teaching of phonics skills
- direct teaching and practice in developing fluency
- direct teaching of vocabulary
- direct teaching of comprehension strategies and skills
- sufficient practice of reading connected text

The message is clear—virtually all students can learn to read. And the message is not new. The findings have been clear and consistent. The challenge is for adults to create the conditions that make this learning happen.

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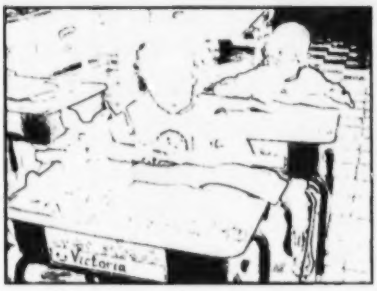
Table of Contents



Portland Elementary School
Portland, Arkansas
Ernest Smith, Principal 2

Fort Worth Independent School District
Fort Worth, Texas
Marsha Sonnenberg, Reading Consultant 4

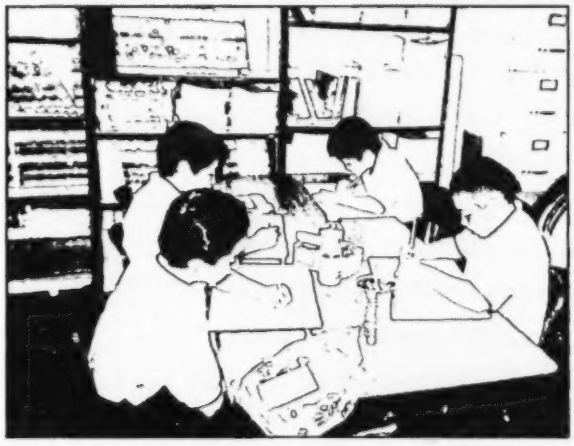
Wilson Primary School
Phoenix, Arizona
Debbi Burdick, Principal 6

Lebanon School District
Lebanon, Pennsylvania
Dr. Frederick Richter, Assistant to the Superintendent 8

Park Forest-Chicago Heights School District 163
Chicago, Illinois
Karen Eisenbart, Director of Reading Instruction 10

Roland Park Elementary/Middle School
Baltimore, Maryland
Mariale Hardiman, Principal 12

City Springs Elementary School
Baltimore, Maryland
Bernice Whelchel, Principal 14



Eshelman Avenue Elementary
Lomita, California
Winnie Washington, Principal 16

Appendix
Research Supporting Instruction in *Reading Mastery*: A Selected Annotated Bibliography 18

Portland Elementary School, Portland, Arkansas

If you plan to visit Portland Elementary School, it would be best to get directions before you go. First drive south from Little Rock for two hours, go through Lake Village, turn at the town's lone stoplight, then drive for another ten miles or so through the region's cotton fields. After a few more turns, you'll pass the John Deere store. The school is just past that on the left.

Portland, Arkansas, population 560, is the last place you would expect to find a model elementary school. But this tiny town is home to an elementary school with a success so extraordinary that it attracts national attention.

The Challenge

That wasn't the case nine years ago when Ernest Smith took over as principal of Portland Elementary School. With 155 students in Grades Pre-K through 6, the majority of whom live in low-income homes, the school had been rated at the bottom of the district for years. Test scores hovered at the 38th percentile, 12 percentage points below the district average. Half of the students in Grades 4 through 6 scored two or more years below grade level on national tests. "Still, we thought we were doing well," says Smith. "Nothing exceptional was ever expected to happen at Portland."

The change began when district and state officials urged Smith to visit a nearby school using *Reading Mastery*. Seeing the students' intense involvement in the program made Smith a convert. In 1995 he implemented *Reading Mastery* into Portland Elementary and hired consultants to train his staff and follow up with periodic visits.

Reading Mastery

Reading Mastery was instrumental in bringing about the school's turnaround. Student average test scores improved from the 38th mean national percentile to just below the 60th mean national percentile. The school gained 5 percentile points each year and led the district average within four years. By 1998, Portland Elementary was consistently outscoring the rest of the state on the SAT/9 test. That year, fifth graders scored a mean national percentile of 60 on the SAT/9, compared to only 43 statewide. The success has continued ever since, with fifth graders scoring a mean national percentile of 61 in 2000, thirteen points higher than the rest of the state. Almost the entire diverse student body, which is 44 percent African American and 4 percent Hispanic, now reads at grade level or higher. Today, scores significantly exceed the performance of students not only in Arkansas, but also in the Southeastern U.S. and the nation.

Personal Achievement

"There's a lot of positive reinforcement," says Sheila Greene, a guidance counselor. "Students are not singled out to be ridiculed, and the students don't realize they are in a lower group ability-wise. They aren't stigmatized as underachievers." Before *Reading Mastery*, 18 percent of students were assigned to special education classes. After the implementation of *Reading Mastery*, that number was trimmed to 5 percent.

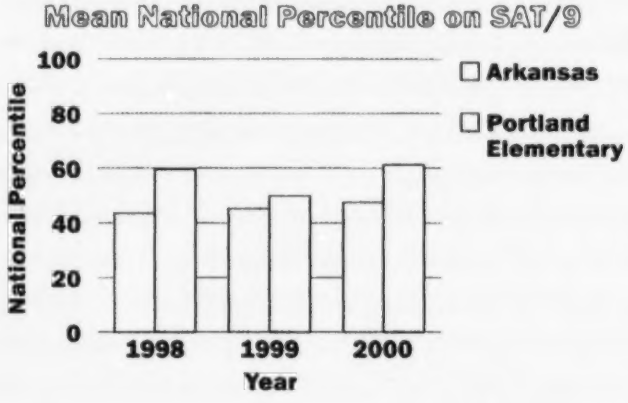
Perhaps the school's biggest accomplishment was doing what other schools in the district found difficult: helping underprivileged children succeed. Principal Smith attributes much of the school's success to *Reading Mastery*. The program "has taught us that all children, when placed at their appropriate instructional level, can learn," he said.

National Recognition

The dramatic rise in scores did not go unnoticed. In May 1998, the U.S. Department of Education recognized Portland Elementary School as a Distinguished Title I school. Only 109 schools of 54,000 received this award. In January 1999, Portland Elementary was selected to take part in a national study of high-performing, high-poverty schools.

Soon after, *Reader's Digest* picked up the story. Principal Smith was featured in an article entitled "Principals of Success." *Reading Mastery* has helped transform this small public school in a tiny Mississippi River Delta community into a winner.

"This," Principal Smith adds, "is the most exciting period of my life. I have no intention of retiring anytime soon."



The results are proven, the possibilities endless.

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Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, Texas

By the end of the 1996-1997 school year, it was apparent that students in the Fort Worth Independent School District were not learning to read at required levels.

The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) reading scores showed minimal gains in third-grade scores from 1994 to 1997. Average scores of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test were falling below the 50th percentile. That same year, the district also failed to meet Imperative I of the District Educational Improvement Plan that stated "all students will be able to read by the end of Grade 2." The district called in a team of reading instruction experts to analyze the problem.

Their solution: The Fort Worth Independent School District must restructure its reading program.

Participating Schools

In the fall of 1997, 18 high-minority, low-income and low-performing schools were chosen to participate in the implementation of *Reading Mastery* for grades Pre-K through 2 scheduled to begin in the 1998-99 school year. Over 300 teachers trained in the program.

Reading Mastery consultants were brought into the schools to help with the implementation. They provided teachers and administrators with feedback regarding classroom instruction. They also assisted teachers at regular intervals and provided feedback, including classroom coaching and formal observations of classroom instruction.

In spring 1999, teachers and administrators were asked to assess the value of the *Reading Mastery* coaching staff. Overall, the staff of the Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) expressed an overwhelming satisfaction with the training and the coaching sessions.

Reading Mastery in the Schools

Using the SAT/9 reading test, students in *Reading Mastery* schools were compared to peers in Fort Worth schools using traditional reading programs. After two years of *Reading Mastery*, the students in the at-risk schools showed greater gains than students in more affluent schools. All grade levels showed gains that were higher in *Reading Mastery* schools than in the others. Notable improvements also included the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI), which identifies students who need help with reading development. Between 1998 and 2000, the percentage of students meeting TPRI criteria jumped nearly 20 points!

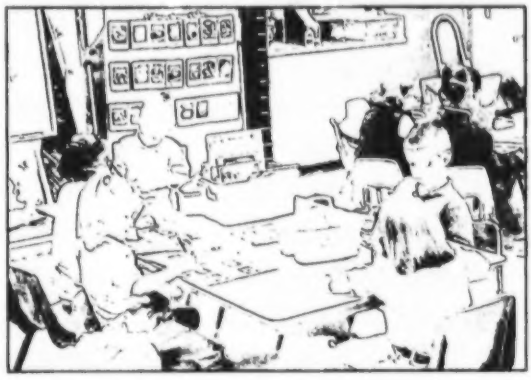
According to Dan O'Brien, a Dallas-based researcher who has been evaluating the Fort Worth reading program for the past three years, first graders taught by Direct Instruction showed a far greater increase in reading comprehension than students taught through more traditional methods. "Students in the lower grades are being given an early boost to their school careers," he adds.

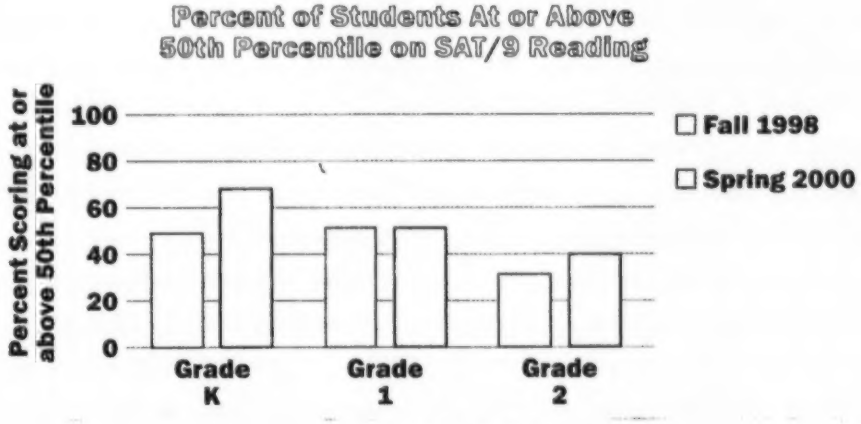
A Happy Ending

Recently, 32 schools in the Fort Worth Independent School District received an Exemplary or a Recognized rating from the Texas Education Agency. This rating is based on test scores from the spring 2000 Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). To receive a coveted Exemplary rating, 90 percent of the school's students are required to pass the reading, mathematics, and writing portions of the TAAS.

The success of *Reading Mastery* can be felt in ways that go beyond the numbers. According to Fort Worth teachers, students are experiencing improvement in self-esteem. The ability to read has opened new doors to learning and to its rewards. Since *Reading Mastery* was introduced into the Fort Worth Independent School District, administrators have noted fewer disciplinary problems and fewer referrals to special education programs.

Reading Mastery works. According to Dr. Thomas Tocco, Superintendent of the Fort Worth Independent School District, "The message is clear. Our students are reading. The gap is closing, and not at the expense of any Fort Worth student."





The results are proven, the possibilities endless.

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Wilson Primary School, Phoenix, Arizona

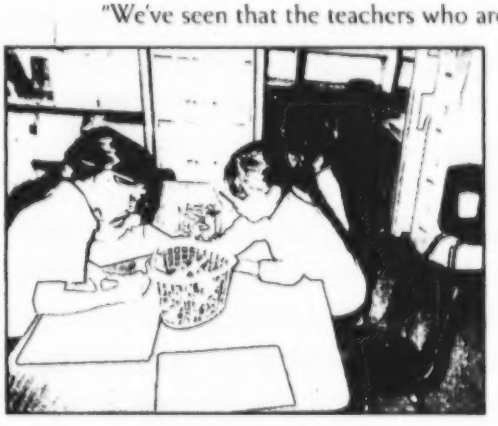
According to the latest U.S. census, Wilson Primary School in central Phoenix is located in the most indigent public school district in the state of Arizona. The school serves a population that is 97 percent minority, 92 percent Hispanic, and 75 percent Limited English Proficient (LEP). "That means the majority of our population spoke another language before they came to school," says Debbi Burdick, principal of Wilson Primary School.

For years, the standardized test scores (SAT/9) in the district were consistently in the teens and twenties. In 1998, the reading score for Grade 3 was at the 17th percentile, up only one percentile point from 1997. It was obvious that something had to change.

A Fresh Start

Starting with the 1998 school year, Wilson Primary School implemented a structured reading program using *Reading Mastery*. All Wilson Primary School teachers went through extensive training in the program. Consultants conducted training in *Reading Mastery* at the beginning of the school year and twice during the year. Teachers then taught the *Reading Mastery* lessons by following the scripted plans written in the Teacher Presentation Books.

"We've seen that the teachers who are consistent and do follow the program carefully are the ones that have the highest achievement," noted Burdick. "Our job in kindergarten – besides everything else – is teaching these kids to speak, read, and write English."



The strategy worked. After the first year of implementation, the Grade 3 SAT/9 reading scores leaped from the 17th percentile to the 50th percentile. The language arts scores rocketed from the 21st percentile in 1998 to the 59th percentile in 1999, then to the 71st percentile in the spring of 2000. The mean national percentile on the SAT/9 has grown exponentially as well, from 50 in 1999 to 61 in 2001. In 2001, the score for the rest of Arizona was just 50.

Currently, the reading instruction is consistent across all levels. Teachers use *Reading Mastery* to teach decoding and comprehension in a 120-minute daily block. The first 45 minutes are devoted to *Reading Mastery*,

and then the students are given time to read whatever they want. According to Burdick, students learned not only how to read but also to enjoy reading.

All Wilson teachers were required to attend meetings with reading consultants. "Reading is the key. We teach reading in everything we do," adds Burdick. With *Reading Mastery*, "it's all down in writing. There is no guesswork."

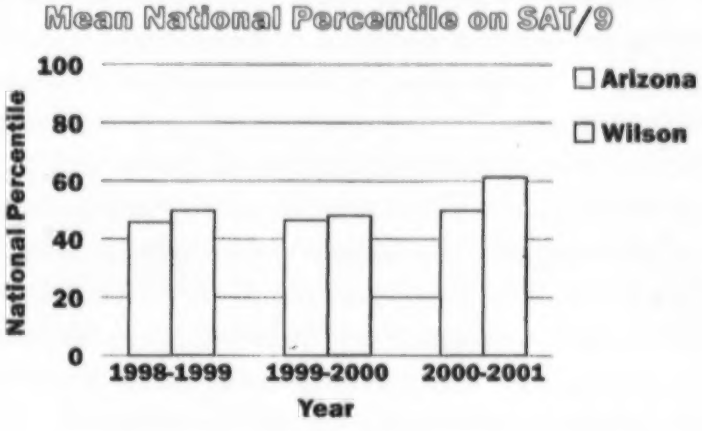
A Personal Testimonial

In the first-grade classroom, the teacher stands before the class and reads from the script. "When I hold up my finger, say rrr. Get ready." The teacher holds up a finger, "rrr." The students respond in unison, "rrr." "Next sound," says the teacher. "Say fff. Get ready. fff." The students again respond in unison, "fff." The teacher does not move to another sound until each student has answered correctly.

Debbi Burdick has embraced the philosophy of Direct Instruction programs. In her experience, other reading or comprehension programs did not work for students with risk factors or language barriers. Sometimes the teachers did not feel they were equipped to teach the content correctly. With *Reading Mastery*,

however, and with the staff development provided, teachers now feel confident in their ability to teach all of their students, and the test scores verify their feelings. *Reading Mastery*, Burdick believes, is an extraordinary way for second-language learners to learn how to read.

According to Burdick, *Reading Mastery* is "the most phenomenal thing I've ever seen, and I'm kicking myself for not considering it sooner."



The results are proven, the possibilities endless.

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Lebanon School District, Lebanon, Pennsylvania

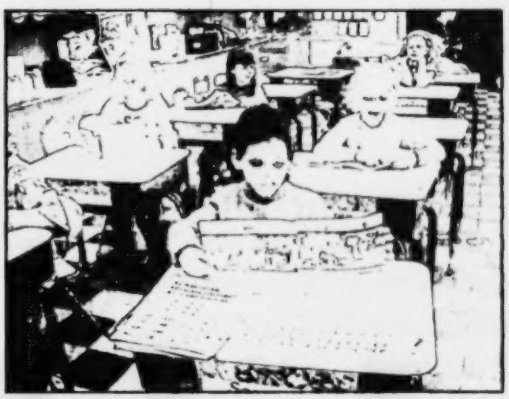
The Lebanon School District has always been committed to ensuring a successful start for all its students.

Located in the rolling hills of south-central Pennsylvania, the Lebanon School District is home to five urban elementary schools serving more than 2,300 students in Grades K through 5. As in many urban school districts, its student body is diverse: 22 percent of students are Hispanic, while 5 percent are African American, Asian, or other minority.

In the mid-1990s, the Lebanon School District saw its reading test scores drop. Concerned that its scores would continue to fall, the district's reading committee decided it was time to look at some other programs.

Reading Mastery

SRA's *Reading Mastery* was chosen first among all programs because it gets results. Since the program was first developed in the late 1960s, schools around the country have seen dramatic gains in their reading and comprehension scores. In most cases, *Reading Mastery* is used to teach special education children or children from less affluent communities. And because of the program's structure, teachers can move children to higher or lower levels based on their accomplishments. As the Lebanon District learned, the *Reading Mastery* program offered the structure and discipline the students needed.



Dr. Frederick Richter, Assistant to the Superintendent, implemented *Reading Mastery* for Grades 1 through 5. The school also provided instruction in before- and after-school programs and in summer school.

Students are first grouped based on reading ability as identified by a carefully developed and researched placement test. Then teachers, using a script, instruct students in decoding. Following this practice, the students learn to associate each sound with its written symbol, responding to the teacher aloud as the lesson proceeds. The lesson continues until each student is ready to move up to the next level.

Success

The results were immediate. Within a year, students progressed at least one grade level in their reading ability. In the four years since the Lebanon School District began using the program, Grade 5 scores on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) rose by 50 points. The percentage of fifth-grade students scoring proficient and advanced on the PSSA has climbed from 40 percent in 1997 to nearly 50 percent in 2001. In that same time frame, students in Grade 5 also increased their reading fluency from 117 words per minute to 166 words per minute. In Grade 2, students increased their reading fluency from 54 words per minute to 118 words per minute.

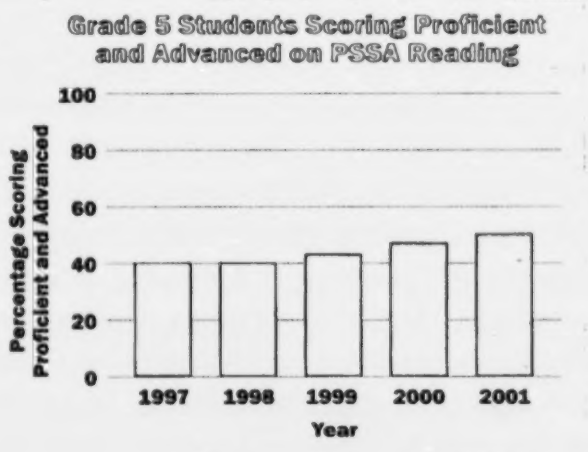
Reading Mastery proved to be a huge success. The Lebanon School District has since expanded the program to include its 900-student middle school. According to Richter, *Reading Mastery* "is a scripted program where teachers have a script to read. The success of the program speaks for itself."

To keep the teachers on track, a *Reading Mastery* consultant visits the school on an ongoing basis. "The professional support has been incredible," says Richter. "And the training goes further than just what is on the written page. During these sessions, our teachers gain a deeper appreciation of what it takes for a student to learn how to read. That's what makes this program so unique and successful."

Accolades

An Educator's Guide to Schoolwide Reform, a report that examines and rates the effectiveness of schoolwide learning programs, found strong evidence that *Reading Mastery* has positive effects on student achievement. The report, prepared by the American Institutes of Research (AIR), gave this top ranking to only three of twenty-four approaches.

"When you look at the research, you can't ignore *Reading Mastery*," adds Richter. "We made the right decision."



The results are proven, the possibilities endless.

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Park Forest-Chicago Heights School District 163, Chicago, Illinois

Dr. Elizabeth H. Reynolds, superintendent of Park Forest-Chicago Heights School District 163, knew something had to change.

Her school district had been suffering through poor scores on state and national tests for years. The district's Terra Nova Assessment data from 1997 showed that students in Grades 1 through 8 averaged a 46 Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE). This meant that the students were reading below the national average.

"Obviously, the existing reading curriculum was not doing the job," said Dr. Reynolds. "Sixty-five percent of our students are economically disadvantaged. Seventy-two percent come from low-income households. Seventy percent of our students are African American and 4 percent are Hispanic. A disciplined reading program is essential for a diverse population such as that in our district."

Park Forest-Chicago Heights School District 163 began searching for an answer.

Reading Mastery

At the beginning of the 1998-99 school year, Dr. Reynolds implemented *Reading Mastery*, a Direct Instruction program for reading, in six Pre-K through eighth-grade schools serving a total of 2,200 students. J/P Associates, a consulting group that is expert in professional development for elementary educators, worked with the district on the implementation. The consultants trained teachers and administrators in the program and provided hands-on assistance throughout the school year.

Based on this training, teachers in the lower grades learned how to teach interactive lessons to small groups of students. Students gave oral responses, which were monitored and immediately corrected. *Reading Mastery* also gave the teaching staff flexibility. Students who learned quickly were given accelerated instruction, while those who needed extra help received it. Most importantly, students with special needs were included in the program whenever possible.

Compelling Results

The impact of *Reading Mastery* was immediate. Results in the first year alone showed overall improvement throughout all grade levels. After

two years using *Reading Mastery*, the district's average scores climbed to 52 NCE. The largest gain occurred in Grade 1, which soared to a mean NCE of 65.6. After only two years, students in all grades were now reading above the national average.

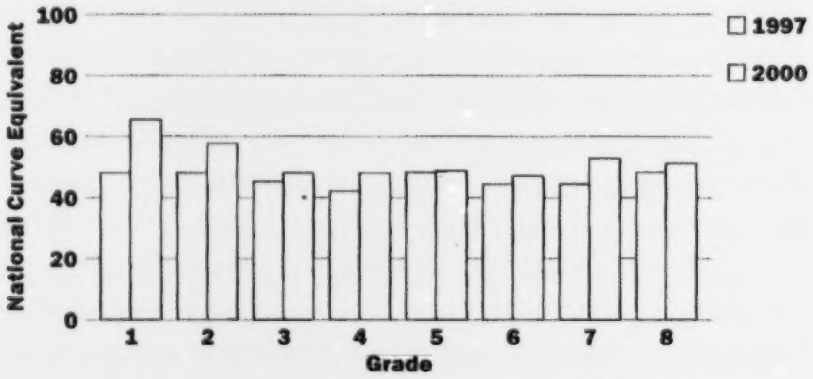
"I was amazed," said Dr. Reynolds. "I knew that *Reading Mastery* had a history of success, however I did not expect the results to come so quickly or to be so dramatic. When the reading scores came in, I knew that we had turned the corner."

A Sign of Success

Park Forest students in Grades 2 and 3 are involved in the Reading is Fundamental (RIF) program. Every year, students in RIF have the opportunity to select books provided in this federally funded program. Within one year after beginning *Reading Mastery*, the students' selection of books moved to a higher level, and additional books had to be purchased in the program to meet student needs.

According to Dr. Reynolds, *Reading Mastery* "has made a huge difference in the way our students are performing. Our students are now reading well and feel more confident about reading to any audience. Parents also are extremely pleased about the difference they can see in their children. Looking ahead, we can see elementary students who should be fully prepared for any high school or college across the country."

Mean Normal Curve Equivalents on Terra Nova Assessment



The results are proven, the possibilities endless.

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Roland Park Elementary/Middle School, Baltimore, Maryland

The best always strive for improvement. That's certainly true of Roland Park Elementary/Middle School, located in the Baltimore City School District. As one of the top performing schools in the Baltimore metropolitan area, Roland Park exemplifies the best that education has to offer. The school was recognized in a *U.S. News and World Report* article and in 1998 was named a "Blue Ribbon School of Excellence," which signifies high academic standards, high student achievement, and innovative schoolwide programs, among other qualities.

Roland Park School's population represents the diversity of Baltimore's population. The school is home to almost 1,400 students attending Grades K through 8, with 35 percent economically disadvantaged and a 69 percent minority population. To make sure that not one student falls through the cracks, the school has strived to provide varied programs to meet the needs of its diverse student body.

Even so, Principal Mariale Hardiman wanted to improve the school's reading program. "We had no citywide program in place," she said. "So there was no consistency across schools or even across classrooms. It was apparent that our school needed a K-5 program that would give our teachers and staff more training and ongoing support. When it came time to make a decision to choose a reading program, the choice wasn't difficult at all. *Reading Mastery* was by far the best."

Polishing the Gem

Principal Hardiman implemented *Reading Mastery* for all of Roland Park's K-5 students in reading and language. The program was blended in as a component of a teacher-driven curriculum that included core knowledge, literature, and performance-based instruction. J/P Associates, a consulting group that provides professional development and hands-on assistance to schools utilizing the Direct Instruction methodology, worked with the district on its implementation.

"The *Reading Mastery* consultants made sure we didn't stray off course," said Principal Hardiman. "They provided the training our teachers needed to ensure the program was implemented properly and was a success."

Within one year, students progressed at least one reading grade level. In addition, two-thirds of the students in Grade 5 had finished *Reading Mastery* Level 6 by the

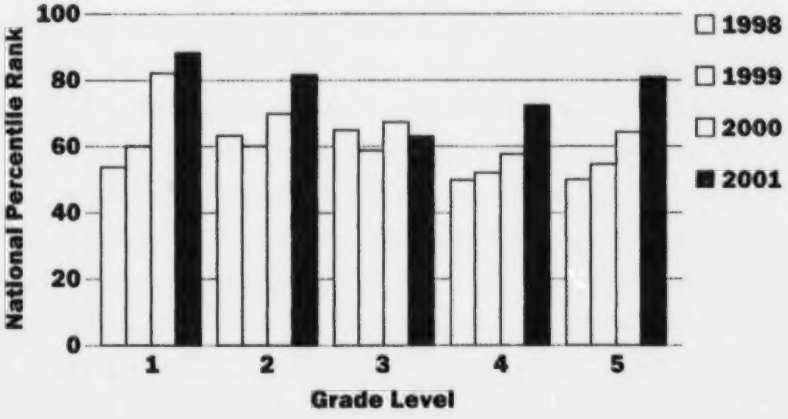
end of the year. Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) scores for Grade 5 moved from a mean national ranking of 50 in 1998 to a ranking of 64 in 2000. The largest and most significant growth occurred in Grade 1. In 1998, the students in Grade 1 had a mean national percentile of 54.5. In 2000, the mean national ranking skyrocketed to 82, a growth of almost 28 points! Between 1998 and 2000, Roland Park saw an increase in reading scores across all the grade levels.

Teachers at Roland Park also noted how the better reading skills improved scores in other subjects as well. "The ability to read is the foundation of learning," said Principal Hardiman. "Ever since the implementation of *Reading Mastery*, we have seen the students' scores rise in nearly every subject, from science to social studies."

Reading Mastery "has really contributed to the strong reading ability of our kids," she added. "And the parents agree. Whatever your philosophy is on reading, our scores clearly indicate that the *Reading Mastery* program is successful."

Roland Park Elementary/Middle School's philosophy of education is best reflected in its motto: "All students are gifted and all students get smart."

CTBS National Reading Comprehension



The results are proven, the possibilities endless.

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City Springs Elementary School, Baltimore, Maryland

In 1995, City Springs Elementary School was in dire straits. Located in southeast Baltimore in one of the poorest sections of the city, the school had to improve its test scores or face closure.

"We were in a very difficult position," said Bernice Whelchel, principal of the K–5 elementary school. "Our school serves a poor and largely minority community pulled primarily from nearby public housing projects. All of our students receive Title I services, while 95 percent of our students are in the free/reduced lunch program. In 1994, we didn't have a single student in Grade 5 who had scored 'satisfactory or above' in the Reading, Writing, and Language Usage sections of the Maryland Schools Proficiency Assessment Program (MSPAP). But our difficulties went beyond the classroom. Attendance had been low for years, and many students were unruly and disruptive."

With City Springs Elementary School on the verge of closure by the state of Maryland, Principal Whelchel believed that radical changes in curriculum and expectations were necessary to save the school and its students.

Help Arrives

In 1996, Principal Whelchel and the City Springs teachers adopted *Reading Mastery* in the hope of turning the school around. The staff at City Springs Elementary had great confidence in the program. In testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives, Whelchel stated that *Reading Mastery* "has been the subject of numerous studies that have compared the effectiveness of various programs on the achievement of groups of diverse students." She went on to state that *Reading Mastery* "does produce the desired result."

Students were grouped by ability, based on carefully designed placement tests. Teachers then used the *Reading Mastery* scripted lessons to teach essential reading skills presented in a specific sequence that is based on years of research and field-testing. Program support materials showed teachers how to measure student progress and how to assure that students retain the newly acquired learning. Using *Reading Mastery*, mistakes were corrected immediately, before bad learning habits were formed. Students demonstrated mastery of each reading lesson before moving to the next level.

The Impact

In many cases, five years may be needed before schools see significant improvements in test scores, but the improvements in City Springs

Elementary were almost immediate. The percentage of City Springs students in Grade 5 who passed the MSPAP Language Usage section increased from 1.8 percent in 1997 to 8.2 percent in 1998. In 2000, 16.4 percent of City Springs Grade 5 students earned the "excellent" mark in Language Usage, an amazing success considering that in 1994 not one student had hit the mark. The school was removed from the Maryland Department of Education's "failing" schools list in January 2002, because of improved test scores.

Scores improved throughout the grades because the school made a commitment to *Reading Mastery*. "It's a step-by-step procedure," says Whelchel, "so that we can reach every child. We absolutely love this program because not only can our students read, but they're also learning problem-solving strategies."

Reading Mastery had a profound influence on student behavior as well as on academics. According to Whelchel, the program has "created a rewarding learning environment. Our school climate has improved. Students do not become frustrated and act out because their work is based on their levels of learning. Students are on task almost all the time, hallways are free from disruption, disciplinary referrals are down, and attendance is above 97 percent."

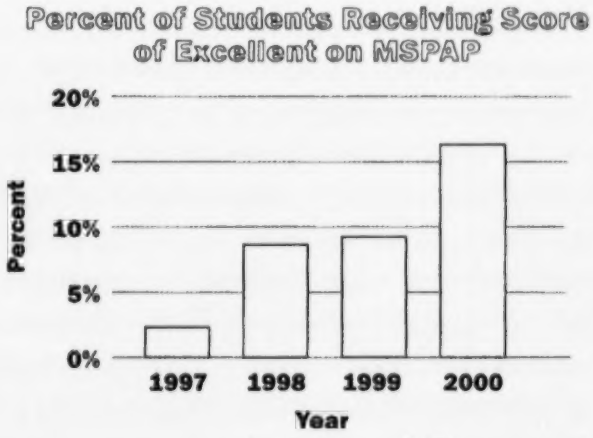
Tomorrow

Principal Whelchel feels an immense satisfaction in the students' progress. Every so often she will look in on classrooms to see *Reading Mastery* in action, and she is never disappointed with the results. Not only are students learning, but their satisfaction and confidence are immediately apparent.

"You would have never seen that ten years ago," says one teacher at City Springs Elementary. "The *Reading Mastery* program is proof that students of a low socioeconomic status can and will succeed."

The future of City Springs is promising. Its struggle and ultimate success have already been documented in the PBS documentary "The Battle of City Springs." Reading scores continue to rise year after year. Whelchel sees only a brighter tomorrow.

"Next year," she says, "we're going to knock the socks off the tests again."



The results are proven, the possibilities endless.

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Eshelman Avenue Elementary, Lomita, CA

The students at Eshelman Avenue Elementary face many hurdles even before entering the classroom. The K-5 elementary school is located in a poverty-stricken area. Seventy-three percent of the students are minority and an equal percent receive a reduced-cost or free lunch. Many of the students speak little or no English at home.

Until 1997, test scores showed that few students were overcoming these hurdles. During the 1997-1998 school year, students were reading well below the national average. In the following year, only 18 percent of Eshelman's fourth graders were at or above the national average. This was compared to 40 percent of fourth graders statewide and 21 percent in the entire Los Angeles Unified School District.

In 2000, students in second, third, and fourth grade did better than their peers statewide in the reading portion of the SAT/9 basic skills exam. Fifty-four percent of fourth graders scored at or above the 50th percentile in reading, a full 25 percent higher than the Los Angeles Unified fourth-grade average. Between 1998-2001, reading scores on the SAT/9 for grades 2 through 4 skyrocketed more than twenty points. The largest jump occurred in Grade 2, from only 39 percent of students at or above the 50th percentile in 1998 to 60 percent in 2001. Math scores were even higher, which district officials attributed to the students' ability to read and comprehend the test questions.

What was the reason for this dramatic change?
Reading Mastery!

A Fresh Start

The success of *Reading Mastery* was significant. Already used by hundreds of schools nationwide, this program is ideal for special education students and students from disadvantaged communities. Teachers "signal" to keep students in step with the instruction and then wait as students pronounce sounds and words. Any student who falls behind is immediately corrected so that bad learning habits are not formed. Also, teachers, aides, and the principal are trained in the program and attend regular review sessions taught by consultants.

When Joanne Vegher, a kindergarten teacher at Eshelman, began using *Reading Mastery*, she soon discovered the creativity the scripted program allowed her. The structured program also gave her the opportunity to

work individually with each student. This was very important to her. "It has a structure but within that structure is a great deal of flexibility," she said. "You are able to reinforce daily what you've taught before. If children need to move to another group, either up or down, it's easy to move them gracefully."

Principal Winnie Washington cites other advantages of the program. "You see kids on task," she says. "There are no more disciplinary problems. The kids feel better about themselves because they are successful."

Success

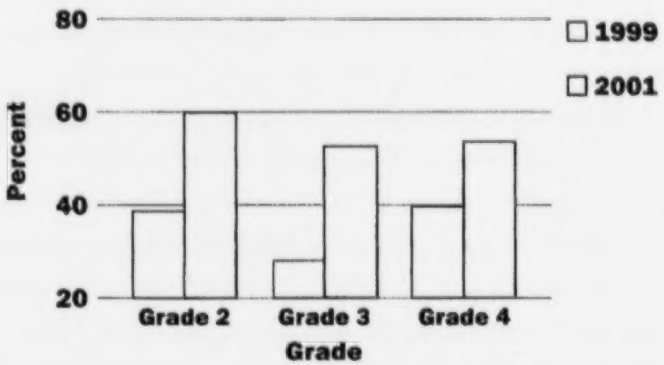
Test scores show that *Reading Mastery* works. In the 2000-2001 school year, Eshelman's Academic Performance Index (API) score was 644, a 63-point improvement from just one year before. The API score for the 2001-2002 school year was even better. Eshelman's API score soared to 707, another 63-point gain! More notably, 33 percent of Limited English Proficient students scored in the 50th percentile or higher on the SAT/9 compared to only 17 percent statewide.

Reading Mastery goes beyond the classroom as well. Eshelman Avenue Elementary has family nights that expose parents to the reading program. During these family

nights, Reading Coordinator Gary Kolumbic, who was a key contributor to the success of *Reading Mastery* at Eshelman, trains parents to teach their children to read. The school also takes part in the "Reading by Nine" program.

In just three years, Eshelman Avenue Elementary has seen a dramatic climb in reading scores. It's obvious that *Reading Mastery* works.

Percent of Students Scoring at or above 50th Percentile on SAT/9



The results are proven, the possibilities endless.

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Appendix

Research Supporting Instruction in *Reading Mastery*: A Selected Annotated Bibliography

Following is a summary of several of the most significant studies in reading instruction from the past thirty years. Each study has reported results providing insights into at least one element critical to a successful reading program. These studies and many others serve as the cornerstone of the instruction found in *Reading Mastery*. The authors of *Reading Mastery* continue their efforts to update the program as new studies are published and new research on instructional methods becomes available. Several of the studies listed below actually used and/or cited portions of *Reading Mastery* in their investigations of successful practices. Others used instructional methods incorporated in *Reading Mastery*. The sum of the knowledge revealed by these studies continues to support and enhance the philosophy of this program.

Abt Associates. (1977). *Education as experimentation: A planned variation model. Vol. 4B Effects of follow through models.* Cambridge, MA.

Reports on the Project Follow Through studies, which examined the question: What educational model is most successful in promoting and maintaining educational progress of disadvantaged students? Findings show that the Direct Instruction model outperformed other approaches on nearly all measures, and that students in the DI model were at or near national norms on all Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) measures at the end of third grade.

Adams, G. L., & Engelmann, S. (1996). *Research on direct instruction: 25 Years beyond DISTAR.* Seattle, WA: Educational Achievement Systems.

Presents a meta-analysis of research on *Reading Mastery* and other Direct Instruction programs (i.e., instructional programs developed by Engelmann and colleagues). Notes that the Direct Instruction programs were successful with the full range of teacher and student populations.

Adams, M. J. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Draws from decades of research on the nature and development of reading proficiency to show the role that phonics should play in a complete program of beginning reading instruction. Offers research support for the use of systematic, explicit phonics instruction.

American Federation of Teachers. (1998). *Building on the best, learning from what works: Seven promising reading and language arts programs.* Washington, DC.

Part of a series about research-based programs that show promise for raising student reading achievement (especially in low-performing schools), this report includes Direct Instruction as one of seven programs that show evidence of high standards, effectiveness, replicability, and support structures. Concludes that when Direct Instruction is faithfully implemented, "the results are stunning, with some high-poverty schools reporting average test scores at or above grade level—in a few cases, several grades above."

Anderson, R. C., Hiebert, E. H., Scott, J. A., & Wilkinson, I. A. G. (1985). *Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the Commission on Reading*. Washington, DC: The National Institute of Education.

A landmark report that contains a synthesis of extensive research findings on the nature of reading and reading instruction. Proposes that (1) the knowledge is now available to make worthwhile improvements in reading throughout the United States, and (2) if the practices seen in the classrooms of the best teachers in the best schools could be introduced everywhere, improvement in reading would be dramatic.

Ashworth, D. R. (1999). Effects of direct instruction and basal reading instruction programs on the reading achievement of second graders. *Reading Improvement, 36*, 150–156.

Describes a two-year study that compared the reading achievement of second graders who were taught with *Reading Mastery* to that of students who were taught with a basal reading program. Finds that *Reading Mastery* instruction was more successful than that of the basal reading program in raising the achievement scores of students in the areas of vocabulary, comprehension, and spelling.

Baker, S. K., Kameenui, E. J., Simmons, D. C., & Stahl, S. A. (1994). Beginning reading: Educational tools for diverse learners. *School Psychology Review, 23*, 372–391.

Provides a framework for the improvement of instructional tools in beginning reading, with emphasis on their importance for students with diverse learning needs. Stresses the importance of explicitly teaching the alphabetic code as part of beginning reading instruction.

Ball, E. W., & Blachman, B. A. (1991). Does phoneme awareness training in kindergarten make a difference in early word recognition and developmental spelling? *Reading Research Quarterly, 26*, 49–66.

Finds that seven weeks of explicit instruction in phonemic awareness combined with explicit instruction in sound-letter correspondences was more powerful than instruction in sound-letter correspondences alone and more powerful than language activities in improving the reading skills of kindergarten students.

Beck, I. L., & McCaslin, E. S. (1978). *An analysis of dimensions that affect the development of code-breaking ability in eight beginning reading programs*. LRDC Report No. 1978/6. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Learning Research and Development Center.

Reports on a study that examined eight widely used beginning reading programs to discover how the readers are taught to break the letter-sound code, what letter-sound correspondences are taught, and how these correspondences are sequenced and taught in each program. Concludes that the ability to read new words is enhanced by programs that provide direct letter-sound training rather than whole-word training. Recommends a code-oriented, direct instruction model of instruction that contains the following features: direct instruction in letter-sound correspondence, a definite instructional strategy for teaching blending, and repeated opportunities for students to apply learned correspondences and blending to the reading of words in connected text. Notes also that facility in word recognition is developed through repeated exposure to the same words in different texts. Rates *Reading Mastery* as 100% code-oriented.

Bond, G., & Dykstra, R. (1967). The cooperative research program in first-grade reading instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly, 2*, 5–142.

Presents extensive data drawn from the 27 individual studies that comprised a large federally funded program that investigated various methods of instruction and their effects on students' reading and spelling achievement at the end of the first grade. Concludes that teaching methods that include systematic phonics instruction are superior to other methods for improving achievement in word recognition and spelling.

Branwhite, A. B. (1983). Boosting reading skills by direct instruction. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 53,* 291–298.

Reports on intervention efforts to improve reading among 14 students (8–12 years of age) with differing levels of reading deficiency. Found Direct Instruction (*DISTAR*) to be more effective in accelerating reading growth than diagnostic-prescriptive remediation.

Brent, G., DiObida, N., & Gavin, F. (1986). Camden direct instruction project 1984–1985. *Urban Education, 21,* 138–148.

Presents findings of two studies that showed the efficacy of using *Reading Mastery* to increase students' reading abilities in Camden, NJ, elementary schools.

Carnine, D. W. (1977). Phonics versus look-say: Transfer to new words. *Reading Teacher, 30,* 636–640.

Reports that teaching students letter-sound correspondences and sounding out resulted in the correct identification of more unfamiliar words than did teaching students to use a whole-word strategy.

Carnine, L., Carnine, D. W., & Gersten, R. (1984). Analysis of oral reading errors made by economically disadvantaged students taught with a synthetic phonics approach. *Reading Research Quarterly, 19,* 343–356.

Finds that students who learn to read in *Reading Mastery* are able to use context to figure out new vocabulary words just as readily as students who are taught in a meaning-emphasis program. Concludes that *Reading Mastery* does develop students' ability to use context.

Chall, J. S. (1967). *Learning to read: The great debate.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

A landmark examination of a large body of reading- and learning-related research. Concludes that, as a complement to connected and meaningful reading, focused instruction in phonics is superior to instruction without this focus in teaching students word recognition, oral reading, and spelling. These findings hold for both low performers and normally achieving students.

Cunningham, A. E. (1990). Explicit versus implicit instruction in phonological awareness. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 50,* 429–444.

Finds that explicit instruction in how segmentation and blending are involved in the reading process is superior to instruction that does not explicitly teach kindergarten students to apply phonemic awareness to reading. Notes that the students who received explicit instruction in phonemic awareness did better than did a group of first-grade students who had no instruction.

Foorman, B. R. (1995). Research on "the great debate": Code-oriented versus whole language approaches to reading instruction. *School Psychology Review, 24,* 376–392.

Reviews "the great debate" over code-emphasis versus meaning-emphasis reading instruction. Concludes that "empirical evidence favors explicit instruction in alphabetic coding."

Foorman, B. R., Francis, D., Novy, D., & Liberman, D. (1991). How letter-sound instruction mediates progress in first-grade reading and spelling. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 83,* 456–469.

Describes a study that involved 80 first-grade students in classrooms that differed in the amount of sound-letter instruction offered daily. Reports that students in classrooms that provided more letter-sound instruction demonstrated a significant increase in accurate reading of both regular and irregular words, as well as more improvement in spelling, compared with students in classrooms with less sound-letter instruction.

Gettinger, M. (1986). Prereading skills and achievement under three approaches to teaching word recognition. *Journal of Research and Development in Education, 19,* 1–9.

Finds that with normally achieving students, explicit phonics instruction achieves better results than does implicit phonics instruction.

Grossen, B. (1997). *A synthesis of research on reading from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development*. Eugene, OR: University of Oregon.

Examines and synthesizes 30 years of reading research carried out by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). Presents seven key research-based principles of effective reading instruction: (1) begin teaching phonemic awareness directly at an early age; (2) teach each sound-letter correspondence explicitly; (3) teach frequent, highly regular sound-letter correspondences systematically; (4) show children exactly how to sound out words; (5) use connected, decodable text for children to practice the sound-letter correspondences that they learn; (6) use interesting stories to develop language comprehension; and (7) balance the use of interesting stories with decoding instruction.

Grossen, B., & Carnine, D. (1991). Strategies for maximizing reading success in the regular education classroom. In G. Stoner, M. Shinn, & H. Walker (Eds.), *Interventions for achievement and behavior problems* (pp. 333–355). Silver Spring, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Concludes that reasoning deductively (logically) is difficult for all populations, but that it can be improved with direct instruction.

Gunn, B., Biglan, A., Smolkowski, K., & Ary, D. The efficacy of supplemental instruction in decoding skills for Hispanic and non-Hispanic students in early elementary school. *Journal of Special Education, 34*, 90–103.

Describes a study that evaluated the effects of supplemental reading instruction (including *Reading Mastery*) for 256 (158 Hispanic) students in kindergarten through third grade. Reports that, after 15 to 16 months of instruction, students who received the supplemental reading instruction performed significantly better on measures of word attack, word identification, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.

Haskell, D. W., Foorman, B. R., & Swank, P. R. (1992). Effects of three orthographic/phonological units on first-grade reading. *Remedial and Special Education (RASE), 13*, 40–49.

Reports that first-grade students who received explicit training in letter-sound correspondence were more accurate on word recognition tests that consisted of regular and irregular words than were students who received whole-word training or no training.

Herman, R., Aladjam, D., McMahon, P., Masem, E., Mulligan, I., Smith, O., O'Malley, A., Quinones, S., Reeve, A., & Woodruff, D. (1999). An educator's guide to schoolwide reform. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.

Describes an extensive project that evaluated 24 popular whole-school reform models and their effects on student achievement outcomes. Direct Instruction is one of only two models targeted for elementary students that received a rating of "strong."

Juel, C., & Minden-Cupp, C. (2000). Learning to read words: Linguistic units and instructional strategies. *Reading Research Quarterly, 35*, 458–492.

Analyzes word recognition instruction in four first-grade classrooms. Concludes that (1) differential instruction may be helpful in first grade; (2) children who enter first grade with low literacy levels benefit from early and intense exposure to phonics; and (3) a structured phonics curriculum that includes a focus on onsets and rimes and sounding and blending phonemes within rimes is effective.

Kaiser, S., Palumbo, K., Bialozor, R. C., & McLaughlin, T. F. (1989). The effects of direct instruction with rural remedial education students: A brief report. *Reading Improvement, 26*, 88–93.

Compares the effectiveness of direct instruction and basal reading instruction in basic word attack and comprehension skills. Finds students' acquisition of basic sight-word vocabulary to be greater when taught by direct instruction than by basal instruction.

Lyon, G. R. (1997). *Report on learning disabilities research.* Testimony given before the Committee on Education and the Workforce in the U. S. House of Representatives.

Argues that the development of phonemic awareness, the development of an understanding of the alphabetic principle, and the translation of these skills to the application of phonics in reading and spelling words are non-negotiable beginning reading skills that all children must master in order to understand what they read and to learn from their reading sessions.

National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction.* Washington DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Presents the findings of the National Reading Panel, a group of reading educators and researchers that was charged by the United States Congress to assess the status of research-based knowledge about reading, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read. The panel's conclusions include the following: (1) systematic phonological and phonemic awareness instruction contributes strongly to reading success, (2) systematic instruction in phonics, stressing letter-sound correspondences and their use in spelling and reading, produces significant benefits for students in grades K–6 and for students having difficulty learning to read, and (3) teaching students to use a range of reading comprehension techniques is the most effective way to improve comprehension.

Pany, D., & McCoy, K. M. (1988). Effects of corrective feedback on word accuracy and reading comprehension of readers with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 21,* 546–550.

Describes s study in which third-grade students with learning disabilities read under three treatment conditions: corrective feedback for every oral reading error, correction only for errors that changed the meaning of the text, and no feedback for any kind of errors. Findings show that providing corrective feedback after every oral reading error improved both word recognition accuracy and reading comprehension.

Perfetti, C. A., Beck, I., Bell, L., & Hughes, C. (1987). Phonemic knowledge and learning to read are reciprocal: A longitudinal study of first-grade children. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 33,* 283–319.

Concludes that success in early reading is a result of direct, systematic instruction in blending.

Pflaum, S., Walberg, H. J., Karigianes, M. L., & Rasher, S. P. (1980). Reading instruction: A quantitative analysis. *Educational Researcher, 9,* 12–18.

Presents findings of a literature synthesis that was conducted to determine whether the belief that beginning reading instruction methods do not significantly differ is correct. Reveals that instructional methods that consistently result in gains in reading are those that systematically and explicitly teach students about letters and sounds, first separately and then blended.

Smith, S., Simmons, D., Gleason, M., Kameenui, E., Baker, S., Sprick, M., Gunn, B., & Thomas, C. (2001). An analysis of phonological awareness instruction in four kindergarten basal reading programs. *Reading and Writing Quarterly, 17,* 25–50.

Recommends design features for phonemic awareness instruction, including (1) providing explicit instruction in blending and segmenting as auditory tasks, (2) systematically sequencing tasks, (3) increasing opportunities for students to produce sounds at the phoneme level, and (4) providing explicit instruction to increase awareness of strategies that allow students to perceive phonemes. Notes that these features are best accomplished through teacher modeling of specific sounds, having students produce the sounds, and having students form mental manipulations of the sounds.

Snider, V. E. (1990). Direct instruction reading with average first graders. *Reading Improvement, 27*, 143–148.

Finds that systematic, direct phonics instruction is more successful than the instruction found in basal reading programs at teaching students the essential skills that provide them with a foundation for reading success. Reports that, contrary to a popular belief, systematic, direct phonics instruction does not interfere with reading comprehension.

Stanovich, K. E. (1994). Romance and reality. *The Reading Teacher, 47*, 280–291.

Concludes that the role played by direct instruction in the alphabetic principle in facilitating early reading instruction is one of the most well-established conclusions in all of reading-related science, and that, conversely, the idea that learning to read is just like learning to speak is accepted by no responsible linguist, psychologist, or cognitive scientist in the research community.

Torgesen, J. K., Wagner, R., Rashotte, C. A., Alexander, A. W., & Conway, T. (1997). Preventive and remedial interventions for children with severe reading disabilities. *Learning Disabilities: A Multi-disciplinary Journal, 8*, 51–61.

Summarizes ongoing research that is designed to generate new knowledge about the relative effectiveness of different approaches in the prevention and remediation of reading disabilities in children, particularly difficulties in acquiring accurate and fluent word reading skills. Subjects, 180 kindergarten students who varied widely in their general verbal ability and home literacy environments, were in one of four instructional conditions, varying in content and level of explicit instruction in phonological/phonemic awareness and sound-letter correspondences. Results indicate that, at the end of the second grade, students who received the most explicit instruction in the alphabetic principle had much stronger reading skills than did students in all the other instructional groups. In addition, students who received the most explicit instruction showed the lowest need to be held back a grade. Other analyses show that growth in reading skills was mediated by improvements in phonological processing skills.

Umbach, B. T., Darch, C., & Halpin, G. (1987). *Teaching reading to low performing first graders in rural schools: A comparison of two instructional approaches.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Mobile, AL, November 11–13).

To determine differences between the reading scores of students taught by a traditional basal reading program approach and a more structured direct instruction approach (*Reading Mastery*), 31 problem readers from two first-grade classrooms in a low-income Southeastern rural community were examined and tested over a year. The two groups were found to be approximately equal in pretest measures. At the end of the treatment period, the direct-instruction group demonstrated significantly higher achievement scores as compared to the scores of students using the basal reading curriculum, with differences occurring in word-identification, word attack, and total reading.

Weisberg, P., & Savard, C. F. (1993). Teaching preschoolers to read: Don't stop between the sounds when segmenting words. *Education and Treatment of Children, 16*, 1–18.

Compares two blending strategies for decoding words (pausing and not pausing between successive sounds) with nine preschool children. Findings indicate that, once mastered, segmenting by not pausing produced high and sustained levels of word identification.

RESULTS
with
READING MASTERY

The results are proven, the possibilities endless.

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